



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE**

**GREATER HARTFORD BRANCH**

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February 4, 2019

Simsbury Public Schools  
Mr. Matthew Curtis, Superintendent  
933 Hopmeadow Street  
Simsbury, CT 06070

Dear Superintendent Curtis,

I am Maxien Robinson-Lewin, President of the Greater Hartford Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), representing 30 cities and town which includes Simsbury. The NAACP is the oldest and largest civil rights organization in the world and our mission is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination.

It is not only our mission to fight racism, it is also our mission to end it as well. It has been brought to our attention that a video/photo was posted on social media with two Simsbury High School students in what appeared to be "Black Face". We are deeply concerned with the verbal minimization of the situation as noted by the statement released to the media. The lack of disciplinary action as evidenced by the one day of inside school suspension assigned by Principal Andrew O'Brien does not match the severity of the situation as viewed by the NAACP and the community.

"Black Face" in any manner is always deemed as racist and we will not stand for such behavior. It is much more than just dark makeup used to enhance a costume. Its racist origins can be traced to minstrel shows. In the mid to late nineteenth century, white racist actors would routinely use black grease paint on their faces when depicting plantation slaves and free blacks on stage. To be clear, these weren't flattering representations taking place against the backdrop of a society that systematically mistreated, dehumanized, killed, raped and enslaved black people. Your students were mocking these portrayals that reinforced the idea that African-Americans are inferior to white people.

In light of the seriousness of this incident and the message that has been sent and received by people of color which spanned far beyond the Simsbury High School community, I am calling for a meeting immediately with you and the Simsbury Board of Education to discuss this matter in greater detail.

I can be reached via email at [greaterhartfordnaacp1@gmail.com](mailto:greaterhartfordnaacp1@gmail.com) or at (860) 253-2750 to schedule a meeting.

In pursuit of equality and justice,

Maxien Robinson-Lewin, President  
Greater Hartford Branch NAACP